A FAIR SUBSTITUTE.

The fact that the speaking tube leading from the prompter's desk to the conductor's chair in the Folly theater at ----shire, England, had refused to fulfill its duties led to two discoveries, one in support of a physical law, the other semiscientific. The physical discovery, so to speak, was that a small mouse can effectually prevent the passage of a large human voice. How the rodent came to make the speaking tube a hiding place matters not. It had forced its way some 10 feet into the tube, and, as Lord Dundreary would say, "The conver-nation ended." The second discovery was an accidental resultant of the useless condition of the speaking tube. Forbes Henley, the stage manager of the

Folly; Corbett Kenyon, the musical director, and Kelley, the gasman and electri-cian, were laughing over the mishap to the tube, and Henley remarked:

"I don't see, Kenyon, how you caught the signals 'f you didn't use the tube.' 'That's the oddest thing of all," said Kenyon, taking hold of the electric light which hung over the conductor's music rack. "This lamp did it. When I didn't get the signal for the overture, I happened to lean over by this light, and I heard a small edition of your voice say, 'What the deuce is the matter with the band? Why don't they begin?' I didn't wait to ask questions of myself, and as I couldn't ask any of any one else through the tube I began the music. Well, I found out that by listening at the electric light I could hear everything said on the stage at the prompt entrance. I can't account for it, but it's

"Ah," said Mr. Kelley, breaking into the conversation, "I understand it all. The electric wires leading from my electric and gas table to your light form an accidental telephone. It often happens. Why, I've seen an ordinary gas pipe which would let you hear conversations held two or three floors away-something like those whispering galleries I've read about." "Well, Kelley, I don't think we'll trust

up the tube before night, won't you!" said "All right, sir." "And see that the opening to the tube is

kept shut hereafter, please."

"All right, sir," again replied Kelley. This conversation had been held after one of the rehearsals of the new opera which the Folly management was about to produce. The members of the company had departed some time ago, and the stage had been "cleared." Up stage, however, during the progress of these discoveries and the talk relating thereto, a young wo-man had been modestly waiting. Kenyon was the first to notice her and remarked in an undertone to Mr. Henley:

"Forbes, I think there's some one wishes Henley turned and spoke up quickly

after recognizing the young lady:
"Did you wish to see me, Miss Mar-"If you please, sir," replied the young

lady, coming down stage hesitatingly.
"Have you been waiting ever since rehearsal? Why didn't you speak before? I'm sorry to have kept you waiting, my dear," using the meaningless term of address in universal use upon the stage.

"I didn't like to interrupt you," she an-"What can I do for you?" asked Henley, looking quite earnestly at her. And he could have looked upon few prettier, more ladylike or more modest appearing damsels in the entire dramatic profession.

With evident embarrassment Miss Marriott answered her mannger: "Could you and Mr. Kenyon do me a great favor-a favor to my mother as well as myself? Mother, as perhaps you know, sir, was once well known as a singer. She's an invalid now, and all the pleasure left her in this world is music. I've told her about rn, and sho wishes she could see the score for only one day. Then, too, although I'm only in the chorus, I like to 'run through' all the operas we sing Mother helps me, and I somehow feel I can understand my own work better when I know the whole opera."

"Do you mean to say you study the whole of the operas we sing!" asked Kenyon, here joining the conversation.

"Yes, sir," replied Miss Mariott, turn-ing to Kenyon. "Pve studied all we've played so far." There was a short silence before Henley spoke, saying: "I'm aure I don't know

what to reply to your request. It's against "Oh, bother the rules!" interrupted

Kenyon. "The opera's ours, isn't it? By Jove, such interest in her work by one of the chorus deserves some recognition. Let Miss Marriott have the extra score. I'll

"Well," said Henley, with a brightened face, "I'm glad to do so if you're willing." He went away, and soon returning handed the young lady a thick volume of manuscript. "There, my dear, that's the piano score. You'll be careful of it. I rely on your not letting any one but your mother and yourself see it. You can keep it till after Sunday. We shan't need it.

"Oh, thank you so much! I'll keep it sacredly. I'll promise no one shall bear or see a note of it but mother and myself." And with an uncommon look of thank-fulness—and something more—divided one-third to Kenyon, two-thirds to Henley, she hastened away. Henley and Kenyon soon followed.

Of all the provincial theaters in Great Britain the Folly of ----shire was perhaps the most successful. All the London productions had found a quick reproduction here, and unvarying prosperity had attended every venture. The company had be-come localized, so to speak, and was a unit-ed, diligent and admirably constructed corps. Continued success had made the management bold, and now a distinctly daring attempt was on the boards-name ly, an entirely new and original opera.
"The Wayside Inn" was in rehearsal for early production. Furthermore, the au-thor of the book of the opera was Forbes Henley; the composer of the music was Corbett Kenyon, stage manager and mu-sical director of the Folly respectively. Therefore these two gentlemen, both young the coming event. Everything thus far had tended toward a thoroughly good production. The entire company—principals, chorus, band—all acted as if they had, each member, a personal interest in the welfare of the new work. All-with the inevitable one exception. That exception was the prima donna of the Folly company, Rose Blanville. Now, it must be confessed that Miss Blanville was a good singer, a clever actress and, moreover, a great favorite with the patrons of the Folly. But-oh, how those three letters do interfere with the even current of life's affairs! -she was not a true artist at heart. She was tricky, as flighty as a woodcock, as unreliable as a tailor's promises, and of late she had tried to show her independ-ence by slighting her work, by breaking the established rules of the theater in a score of petty ways. In all England there was no fairer or more just stage manager than Henley, but he did expect the rules to be obeyed. Only the "fakirs" or "shirk-ers" ever found fault with his discipline. But in the case of Miss Blanville it was 'grin and bear" her impertinences, her small misdemennors, for Rose knew there was not a leading soprano disengaged in all Great Britain. Kenyon knew this, Henley knew it, so they hoped she would grow better natured, and from pride's sake, if nothing more, do her best in the new opera. The rehearsal of today was the second full one—that is, of the entire opera and by all engaged in it. Excepting one or two

nall kicks of Miss Blanville, overything

had passed off most promisingly, and the hopes of the author and composer were on

a high key and at concert pitch.

Several days passed, and rehearsals continued. Improvement was shown at each successive trial, and even the prima donna behaved quite decently. Changes naturally suggested themselves to the author and composes, and a short scene with a few selo lines was introduced into act 2 of both Kenyon and Henley at once and alike that Constance Marriott would do this littla" bit part" nicely. Therefore that young lady was made happy and proud by being chosen to play this small part and also by the knowledge that her name would no longer be submerged and hidden in the line-villagers, peasants, etc., by the la-dies and gentlemen of the chorus. No, although it would be the last on the list

there it would read: "Stella (a dairy maid)
-Miss Constance Marriott," It was quite pleasant, too, to find that the choice had been a good one, for Miss Marriott sang and acted the little scene charmingly. True, both Healey and Kenyon gave her an unusual amount of time and attention in the early rehearsals, but soen, however, size needed no further in-

Thus it went on till the Friday night efore the Monday night on which "The Wayside Inn" was to be first produced. The local papers had been full of glorious advance notices" of the event, and every seat salable had been secured for the opening night. Indeed the London journals had taken up the story, and the musical critics of The Times, The Standard, The Telegraph and a half dozen more of the leading dailies in the metropolis and elsewhere had requested "seats to be set aside" for them for the first night.

Henley was happy. Kenyon was confident. As the former said, "Everything is coming our way." Had he foreseen Friday night's happenings and their consequences he might have added, "And the devil came

There is a very strict rule regarding smoking in the dressing rooms of a theater. Actors—yes, and actresses, so far as cigarettes go-often break the rule, but if caught it means a sure fine, unless for to the accidental telephone. You'll patch some special reason there is a winking at the offense. Now, Healey could forgive anything almost but the ladies smoking eigarettes in their dressing rooms. Too much lace and flimsy stuffs hang around or lie scattered about on the chairs not to make it very dangerous if a lighted cigarette should be dropped carelessly about. It might result in a dire and dread panic, a conflagration, the less of many lives,

On the third floor of that part of the thenter devoted to the dressing rooms in a large room where some half dozen of the rus Indies were wont to attire themselves for the stage between the acts Constance Marriott sat alone on this Friday There was no change of dress for the beginning of the next act of the opera seleg played, and the fair chorus girl had sought scalusion from the chatter of her quantum in the dressing room. Perhaps she was "blue." At any rate, she seemed to be thinking deeply of something or somebody, and with closed eyes she leaned her pretty head against the wall, her chair carelessly tipped back. She was aroused from her reverie by the sound of voices, not near by-no, they seemed, although every word could be distinctly heard, to be far away. Comparing sight and sound, she heard as one sees through opera ginuses reversed. Miss Marriott was nortal, a woman, and-well, she listened. She even blushed at the sound of the volces, for she recognized the speakers,

"Miss Blanville, I've asked you a score of times not to smoke eighreties in your dressing room. It's against the rules," "You don't like it, ch?" The sound of a

woman's voice came up to the listener, "No," was the quick reply, a little louder, "but that's not the reason of the rule nor of my request. Smoking in the theater invalidates our insurance. If I"---"Our insurance-aliem! Our insurance!" was the sarcastic interruption.

'I beg your perdon. The insurance." Here came a pause.

"Will you be so kind as to throw that zarette away?" Yes, when I've smoked all I wish to of it and not before," was the answer.

"Then, Miss Blanville, I shall fine you "You will, will you? And I'll not pay it," said the feminine voice,
"I think you will," was the subdued

but firm rejoinder in male tones. "And I know blamed well I'll not," answered the woman. Just as the conversation ended at this

point another of the chorns girls came into the dressing room where Constance Marriott had been listening. "Oh, Millie," cried Constance at the

sight of her companion, "when you go down stairs will you tell Mr. Henley I'm ill? Ask him to excuse me the next act, will you? There's a dear! I don't want to be fined.

"Why, Counie, are you sick?" "Yes, dear, I am truly-my head aches fearfully,"

"Of course I'll tell him. I'll come back in a minute if I can help you any," said Millie, running out and then returning to say: "Connie, dear, in the pocket of my sack-the gray onc-there's a bit of sher ry in a flask. Take a drop of it, dear, It'll do you good."

Constance didn't wait for the drink or for Millie's return. For only a moment she pressed her ear against the wall and listened. She heard Rose Blanville utter a man's oath, and evidently talking to her waiting maid heard the prima donna say: "The confounded upstart! Fine me, will he? I fancy he'll not! I'll pay him out. Wait till Monday night! He'll find his leading lady out of town. Where'll his

blooming oners be then?" 'You can't do that, miss, can you?" asked the maid.

"I can't, can't I? You see if I can't! My old man's been begging me to give up here. He'll take me to America, he says. He'll buy me a doctor's certificate. play 'Waiker' with Mr. Henley, the duf-fer! It'll be 'Tommy Dodd' with his old

That was enough for Constance. Poor girl, she was in a quandary. All the Blanville's talk might be mere boast. What was Constance to do? She couldn't be a telltale and warn Henley. It would look, too, like currying favor, and how could she tell him the source of her information? Of course she knew as well as if she had shared in the scene all that had taken place in the star dressing room on the first floor, knew who the speakers were as well as if she had seen their lips moving.

She hastened from the theater. Saturday morning a kind note from Henley advising her, if she were a bit ill, not to come to the theater, either to the matinee or evening performance. "I want you to be bright and strong for the last rehearsal Monday," ran the note. It made the tears start to Constance's bright eyes when she read the words the "last rehearsal." Now, when a stage manager writes a note of this sort to a chorus girl it means a good deal. You may not know stage etiquette, and as the boys say, "I'll give you that for a tipper." But you and I do know that Constance was not ill at all. Neveress she remained at home Saturday and did not go out on that or the follow-ing day. Both Henley and Kenyon called at the door of her lodging between mailnee and night performances, but she simply sent a message in reply to their que-ries, saying that she was much better and

would certainly be all right Monday morn-The eventful day arrived. Eventful days are always acting that way-in fact, all days are eventful to some one or another, and they continue to turn up as regularly as tax bills.

Contrary to the usual plan, there had been no Sunday rehearsni. Every one was "dead letter perfect," and the interested parties had decided that a good day's rest

perore the final rehearsal was worth more than one more going over the opera.

Ten a. m. Monday found everybody who should be present on the stage of the Folly theater. The customary "20 minutes' grace" was uncalled for. Every one felt so deep an interest in the new production "The Waysido Inn." It seemed to strike | and had so much pride in doing the best for their fellow manager's and director's opera that, as the low comedy man said, They sat up all night to be on time and would have come on crutches, except that that might suggest a lame performance. "The Wayside Inn" was bound to be "a

great go," so everybody said. The orchestra got a good grasp upon the note A-that is to say, every member of the band put his instrument in tune.

The scene for act 1 of "The Wayside Inn" was set, and Henley said in a low voice, standing in front of Kenyon's desk,
"I think we're all ready, Corbett," Kenon rapped his men to attention and held his baton aloft. A lad came to Henley's side and touched his arm, and the baton slowly descended. "Well, what is it, Williams?" sharply asked Henley. "I don't think Miss Blanville is here,

sir," replied the callboy. Henley said afterward that so far as temperature was concerned the call boy's

words prepared him for arctic exploration in just two seconds. He was outwardly calm, however, and seemed careless in his "All right, we'll have to wait a few minutes then. She's got five minutes more of grace anyhow," looking at his watch. He did not need even the five minutes, for a

a letter. He tore the envelope open and read as follows: Monday Mouning. To Forbes Healey, Esq., Stage Manager Folly

messenger boy appeared and handed him

Theater:
DHAR SIR—I beg to inclose the herewith dr.'s certificate, wich will show you I can't sing tonight. Maybee I shan't smoke no more ciga-rettes, anyway in your theater. yours truly. ROSE BLANVILLE. Miss Blanville was a better singer than

The inclosure was as follows:

This is to certify that, being professionally called in yestermay (Sunday) by Miss Rose Islan-ville, I find her suffering with acute brenchiffs. It would probably cause the loss of her voice to come, and is my professional capacity I have forbidden her to use her voice until I give her permission so to do,

FHANCIS A. CLARRIDGE, M. D.

"It's a lie!" said Henley hoarsely. He caused only a moment and then turned to the assembled company, each man, woman and child of which had seen something was "gone wrong," and said in a steady but very precise manner of speech:

"Ladies and gentlemen, I regret to say that I have a doctor's certificate here announcing the sudden filness of Miss Blanville. The rehearsal is postponed for one hour, if you please, while the management -Mr. Kenyon and myself-consult as to what will be done in the emergency. Please do me the favor not to speak of the matter about town yet awhile. Everything may come out all right. I rely upon your co-operation."

There was a murmur which seemed a ground swell of pity and commiscration for heir stage manager, and the men were ugly in their remarks about that "so and ' Blanville, and the women said, "What a shame!" etc., for no one believed a particle in Miss Blanville's illness. The people were slowly departing when Constance Marriott came down stage and stood before Henley. She said in a quiet, confident way: "Mr. Henley, I wish you would call the people back 21

"Miss Marriott, this is no time for plensantry. I hardly expected it of you," rejoined the stage manager, with an emphasis on the "you."
"Fardon me, Mr. Henley! If you will

only try me, I know I can sing every note of Miss Blanville's part. I think I can act it, with a little help, for I've watched the ess carefully

"Wait a minute!" cried Henley, his face ablaze with hope. He called at the top of his voice: "Please don't go, ladies and gentlemen! Remain where you are just a moment!" Everybody took a position as if for a tableau, and all looked at Constance Marriott and Forbes Henley. "Now go on," said he to the quondam chorus

"Only this," continued Miss Marriott, 'I feared Miss Blanville would disappoint you, and with my mother's help I've learned the music of the part she was to play. You can try me. It will do no harm, and if I succeed you need not postpone the open-

Before Henley could reply Kenyon, who was never heard before or after to utter a profane word, shouted out to the stage manager: "Forbes, I've heard every word she's

said, and by —— I think she can do it. She shall have a try anyhow." And he rapped his men to attention again. Henley said: "We'll begin the rehearsal, please. Attention, every one! Places! Act 1. Oil you go, Corbett!"

The overture went with a snap and dash and needed not a word of correction. The opening chorus, too, seemed to be sung etter than ever before, and everything went swimmingly till the entrance of Grace Damal—the role of the prima donna. Then Constance entered, came down tage for her opening number, a beautiful, mist, rather pathetic song. Kenyon stood up at his desk and whispered to her: "Take your own time! Sing confidently! Trust to me! I'll help you out!"

She didn't need a bit of help-not a bit True, at first her voice trembled just a tri-fle, but Henley whispered, "Don't be afraid—you're all right." And her tones came out clear as a bell. That girl had been taught the right way to produce a note. In heaven's name, what had such a voice been doing in a chorus?

Kenyon smiled, sat down, and albeit watching Constance closely showed he had

o fear or hesitation. The solo ended, the rehearsal stopped. It was no use. It could not go on. The entire company burst into a shout of applause, and as for Henley and Kenyon the latter bad jumped upon the stage right over the footlights and held Constance's hands in his, shaking them up and down as if they were rattles and he a baby. Henley-well, Henley kissed her, he did, and then, looking like a fool, said, 'I fine myself £20, but it's worth it." was quite awhile before the assemblage got

back to its united senses. Why, Miss Marriott's voice was infinitely purer and better than the absent Blanrille's. She felt the music and made you feel it too. Sing? She sang the proverbial lark out of his whole gamut. Finally the rehearsal was resumed, and allowing for a little crudeness here and there, but no nwkwardness-and even the crudeness disappeared as Miss Marriott gained confidence-the role was acted with remarkable finish. "Save your voice, dear," said Henley. "You're all right," smiling on his pretty savior from disaster.
"Just hum through the principal num-

bers once more to get the action," said Kenyon, and by this means parts of the opera were gone over twice or thrice long When night came, to the crowded house

Henley made a splendid speech of explana-tion regarding the change of cast in the

principal role. The audience was a trifle

cold and hesitating until after Constance's first solo, and then, as Kenyon said when he held his stick on high for the tumultuons encore which followed, "She's got 'em!" And in fact she did "have them." The performance was a complete triumph, but whether "The Wayside Inn' or the new prima donna had won the greater success it was difficult to say. The London critics telegraphed over a column each to their saveral journals, and in one night Constance Marciott sprang from a simple chorus girl to the foremost rank among

comic opera singers. Henley whispered to Kenyon as they stood at the stage door after the performance. "All right, old boy. I envy you. Wish

ahead of his partner in success. Henley walked home with Constance Marriott. He must beg her pardon for giving her that kiss. He did so quite eloquently, and she gave it back to him when they got inside the door of her dwelling. What a welcome came from the sweet in

Well, well, well, what a happy hour it was, while Constance told how, after the first rehearsal we have spoken of, she had overheard the description of the accidental telephone from the prompt side to the leader's desk; how she, too, had discovered the same sort of a line of communication leading from the star dressing room to the chorus room; how she had listened that Friday night, how she had deliberately bribed the librarian of the theater to let her have the score, telling him that she had been made "understudy" and needed to look over the prima donna's part; how she and her mother had worked at the role

all Saturday and Sunday, and-You know or can imagine the rest. Forbes kissed her again—this time right before her own mother, who laughed a very knowing laugh. Then Forbes actually kissed the mother.

"The Wayside Inn" ran to crowded couses for over five months and was then taken off. Miss Marriott was unable to appear for two weeks, and the public would have no one else in her role. She took this fortnight's vacation because Mr. and Mrs. Forbes Henley went on their wedding tour.—Nath Childs in Short Stories.

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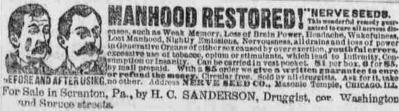
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